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ABSTRACT

The document contains the twelfth statement from the National Advisory Council on Vocational Education. It calls for a strong national policy towards vocational education and emphasizes the growing importance of vocational education in manpower development and the national economy. The lack of a national policy in vocational education has created problems in the definition of responsibilities in various sectors of education and training. A national policy is needed in order to define these responsibilities and to measure the effectiveness of vocational education as well as provide directions for its development and implementation. (EC)

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A CALL FOR A NATIONAL POLICY ON VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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THE NATIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL ON VOCATIONAL EDUCATION was created by the Congress through the Vocational Education Amendments of 1968. Its members, drawn from business, labor, education and the general public are appointed by the President. The Council is charged by law to advise the Commissioner of Education concerning the operation of vocational education programs, make recommendations concerning such programs, and make annual reports to the Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare for transmittal to Congress.

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A report of The National Advisory Council on Vocational Education, December, 1975. Index Number 12.

National Advisory Council o

15 December 1975

The Honorable F.David Mathews
Secretary
Department of Health, Education
and Welfare
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. Secretary:

For seven years, the National Advisory Coun
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It is for these reasons that the National A
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consideration.

Sincerely,

John W. Thiele
Chairman

JWT/jkk

COUNCIL MEMBERS: Senator W.Hughes Brockbank • John H. Bustamante
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National Advisory Council on Vocational Education

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(202) 376-8973

John W. Thiele, *Chairman*
Reginald E. Petty, *Executive Director*

15 December 1975

The Honorable F.David Mathews
Secretary
Department of Health, Education
and Welfare
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. Secretary:

For seven years, the National Advisory Council on Vocational Education has reviewed, evaluated, and reported on the progress, and the shortcomings, of vocational education in America. We have watched vocational education develop from a program designed "for somebody else's children" to a strong and viable delivery system which provides quality education at the secondary, postsecondary and adult levels. The experience has been extremely gratifying.

The Council feels, however, that vocational education has been hampered by the lack of a strong, central policy which recognizes its achievements, its potential, its position in regard to other education and training programs, and its relationship to the national economy. Such a policy is extremely important if vocational education is to realize its full potential for providing the kind of educational and training experiences which the nation seeks and the skilled manpower which our economy demands.

It is for these reasons that the National Advisory Council on Vocational Education has drafted a statement entitled, "A Call for a National Policy on Vocational Education." We respectfully transmit this statement for your consideration.

Sincerely,

John W. Thiele
Chairman

JWT/jkk

COUNCIL MEMBERS: Senator W.Hughes Brockbank • John H. Bustamante • Frank Carnevale • Preston C. Carothers • George B. Cook
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A CALL FOR A NATIONAL POLICY ON VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

Vocational education is becoming the dominant mode of education in America:

- The nation now spends $3 billion each year on vocational education, 84% of which is state and local money.
- Since 1971, expenditures for vocational education construction and instructional equipment have totalled over $1.6 billion.
- Enrollment in vocational education has reached 13½ million.
- Forty-seven percent of our high school students and thirty percent of our community college students are enrolled in vocational education.
- The rate at which students are enrolling in vocational education programs has far exceeded the rate of enrollment in college academic programs.
- Cooperative and work/study programs are helping strengthen the relationship between education and industry. Nearly 650,000 students are now involved in these programs.

Now, for the first time in our history, more than half the labor force is at work in jobs for which educators prepared them.

Vocational education is becoming the nation's most basic industry.

Increasingly, many of our most cherished ambitions as a nation depends for fulfillment on the effectiveness of vocational education. The economy is slowing down, in part because we are not producing the skilled manpower the economy requires to work at full speed. We are losing the technical superiority that has been our proudest export - - the basis for our prosperity. Many of the social ills which cause the most concern - - crime, addiction, dependency - - can be traced to inadequacies in training and retraining.

The growth of vocational education has been very rapid, but unfortunately without any relationship to national goals. Its growth has been growth largely without design - - growth outside any framework of policy. The growth of vocational education has been guided by very general imperatives - - to provide more work-relevant education to more students.

As a result, while the nation has now a vast and growing complex of programs in vocational education, there is not a *national policy* for vocational education. Vocational education has clearly outgrown its original rationale.

This is not to say that vocational education has not changed. It has changed radically in the last twenty years. Vocational curricula have changed. Curricula too narrow in scope and too specific in function have been replaced by broader, more categorical and hence, more adaptable, programs. Vocational education has reached far beyond its original secondary school constituency.

But all these changes have taken place as a random response to circumstances - - not as the orderly implementation of a comprehensive national policy for vocational education.

The consequences of the lack of a national policy for vocational education are becoming more and more severe. It has meant the scope of responsibilities of the vocational education establishment has never been clearly defined. Federal manpower programs can be conceived
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manpower programs can be conceived and activated as if the nation had no vocational training and retraining capability already in place.

It has meant that the expanding role of vocational education at all levels in the nation's community colleges, postsecondary institutions, and vocational schools has been more a product of chance than design.

It has meant that vocational education is exceptionally vulnerable to attack from its critics - - not because it is ineffective, but because there is no national policy against which its effectiveness can be measured.

For example, the General Accounting Office's recent report on vocational education said:

> *Greater attention to systematic, coordinated, comprehensive planning at national, state, and local levels would improve the use of federal funds and better insure that vocational education is provided in a manner that best serves student and community needs.*

They are suggesting, we believe, that vocational education would be better represented by establishing a clear and comprehensive national policy.

It has meant that vocational education can mean one thing to one sector of the educational community, and something quite different to another. Thus, vocational education cannot be publicly perceived as anything more precise and systematic than an emphasis on teaching marketable skills.

It has meant that the recent introduction of the concept of career education caused anxiety and confusion because vocational education had never been defined with sufficient precision.

It has meant that vocational education has been denied a full opportunity to deal effectively with the sweeping changes in the national setting. For example, the drop in the size of the 14-23 year old student population, vocational education's principal constituency, may soon exceed thirty percent in some states.

Women - - who may soon constitute more than half the work force - - are demanding preparation for a radically enlarged range of roles in the world of work.

For these reasons, it is imperative that we begin now to develop a national policy for vocational education.

We urge policy-makers to acknowledge that there is no national policy for vocational education. What passes for policy is a piece-meal accumulation of vocational programs, frequently overlaid on a discredited pattern of general education.

We have no clearly articulated national goals for vocational education. We have no national system of vocational education. We have, instead, a non-system which, while it serves millions well, inevitably neglects and misunderstands millions more.

As a result, there is danger of a massive public disaffection with education. More and more young people are failing to find jobs. More and more young people must painfully adapt a mis-focused educational background to the separate reality of the working world.

We call for a searching reassessment of our whole educational enterprise. We call for a reappraisal of the goals and accomplishments of American education at every level. We recognize that education in America is, in fact, a state and local responsibility. Changes in the last sixty years have been staggering. Mobility has become the norm. The population explosion has multiplied and re-multiplied enrollment in all educational programs. The methods and manpower needs of industry have changed more radically in the last sixty years than in the previous two hundred. People everywhere see the need to strike a more sensible balance between vocational and academic education.

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We seek your support!

We need to know who is being reached through what programs with what final effect. We need to know where we are succeeding and where we are failing. We need new measures of effectiveness.

We believe vocational education is already more certain of its mission and its methods than any other part of the educational establishment. But this is no longer adequate. We need to find out, without prejudice or preconception, precisely what vocational education has done, what it is doing, and what it could do.

We are calling not for a new program, or new appropriations. We are calling for re-appraisal. One step in this process of re-appraisal will be a joint National and State Advisory Council Bicentennial Conference on Vocational Education.

We intend to do more. The National Council will research, evaluate, and prepare a suggested National Policy for Vocational Education. This proposed policy will be presented to the President, and to the Congress for their consideration. We believe that such a policy would move our nation toward a more efficient and systematic educational system.

We seek your support!